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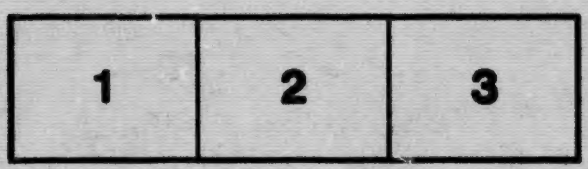

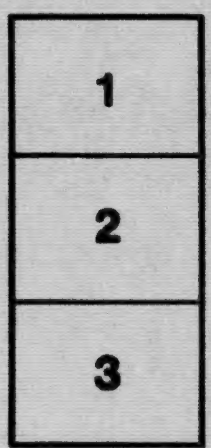

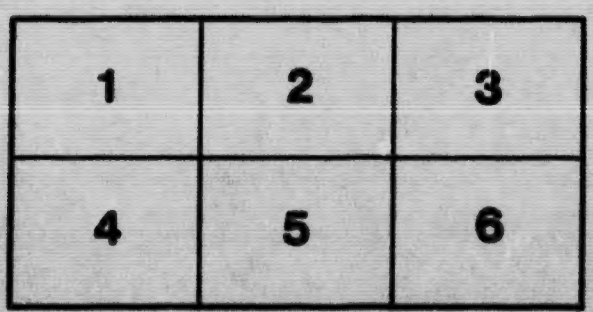

Pastoral Letter

Addressed to

The Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Halifax

BY

The Most Rev. Edward McCarthy,

Archbishop of Halifax

Halifax, N.S.: Printed by Commercial Printing Company
1906

Edward, by the Grace of God and Favour of the Apostolic See, Archbishop of Halifax:

To the Clergy, Religious Orders, and Laity of the Diocese: Health and Benediction in the Lord.

DEARLY BELOVED:

In view of the calamities which have befallen a great portion of the civilized world, we feel that we are bound by a more urgent duty than ever before to remind you of the obligations and of the special opportunities for prayer which come to us at this season. Of the appalling conflict itself, of the havoc and desolation which it spreads far and wide, you are already aware; each day but adds to the harvest of death and the burden of sorrow. And while our own beloved country has been spared the actual clash of arms and its dreadful consequences, we know that many of Canada's sons have given their lives in loyalty to the cause for which the Empire is struggling. We know, too, and with ever deepening sadness, that more than one Canadian home has been bereft of its bravest and best; and our sympathies go out to those who mourn for their loved ones and tremble for others who yet are in danger on distant fields of battle.

From our own deep concern in this war, we can form some estimate of the dread visitation it has been to countless homes in the lands it has ravaged and of

the gloom that it has cast upon the souls of men. For the multitudes who have to bear its trials in bereavement and helpless grief, the complex questions as to its origin and justifications are of minor import; for them the one great fact that war exists is overwhelming in its horror. The heart of humanity is stricken, and its anguish is the first and the strongest protest against this conflict; it is the voice of nature pleading for its right to live, and appealing from the arbitration of force to the higher law which restrains nations as well as individuals from doing injustice.

Nor can it be said that this is but the cry of terror or the lament of popular emotion. Even to the calmest intelligence, the first shock of war was violent; and now that reflective thought has regained its sway, the wisest are sorely perplexed to discover the innermost meaning of the struggle and to forecast its ultimate issues. In the judgment of many, it would almost seem that the long centuries of progress had counted for naught and that the fruits of civilisation for which mankind has suffered and toiled were about to be swept away. Others again have been led to doubt whether it were longer possible to speak of a moral sense as man's distinctive endowment or to set any store by the solemn pledges given by nation to nation. It has even been asserted that religion has failed of its purpose and that the message of peace which Christianity proclaims has been turned to a mockery by the tumult of war — as though the evil-doing of man had made void the justice of God.

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While such sinister thoughts bewilder the minds of men, it is both timely and necessary that we as loyal Christians should quicken our belief in those unchangeable truths which have been given us not only to guide our footsteps in the way of peace but also to steady and strengthen us amid the encircling gloom of human passion and despair. At no other time in the world's history has it been made so plain that the welfare of mankind both temporal and spiritual demands the observance of laws that are not of man's making but that have their origin and sanction in the eternal wisdom of God. No other crisis has shown so clearly that selfishness and greed are fatal alike to individual happiness and to national prosperity. This much at least the war has taught, and it is the prayer of every Christian heart that the lesson, costly as it is, may have its salutary effect in hastening the return of the world to tranquility and to conformity with the spirit of the Gospel.

Learned men, scholars well versed in the world's history and leaders in the various fields of knowledge, have deplored in amazement the rude shattering of their hopes for peace founded on the advance of science and the spread of education. They had come to the conviction that the growth of intelligence and the diffusion of culture would make war impossible, and a shrewder sense of economic interest would silence the clamor of national hatred and that the cult of humanity would unite all men in the pursuit of their common welfare. But a far different reality confronts them. Not only has every effort for the

maintenance of peace proved unavailing, but the very highest attainments of skill, of scientific ingenuity and of organized force have made the conflict more terrible. In astonishment thereat, they are now seeking to explain what they could not or would not foresee.

While many of the explanations are based on imagined causes and while many others ascribe an undue importance to events that are comparatively insignificant, the true causes have nevertheless been pointed out. Above the din of contending opinions, one voice has spoken in no uncertain tones. Sweeping away all pretext and specious assertion, the head of the Catholic Church has laid bare the evil conditions whereof this evil of war is but the culmination. From his exalted position Pope Benedict XV looks with grief upon the struggling nations; but he also looks beneath the surface of things to the underlying causes. He tells the world plainly of the manifold wrongs which have broken the bonds of union between people and people and which have undermined the only solid foundation of human society. Failure, indeed there has been, but it is not the failure of Christianity; it is rather the failure of theories and policies that have pretended to govern the world without any regard for the teachings of Christ and even in open opposition to His commands. "Truly," says the Holy Father, "as soon as the rules and dictates of Christian wisdom, which are the assured basis of stability and peace, came to be disregarded in the ordering of public life, the very structure of

the State began to be shaken to its fall; and there has also ensued so great a change of thought and conduct that unless God comes to the rescue, the dissolution of human society itself would seem to be at hand."

It has undoubtedly been recognized that men must somehow dwell together on this earth and therefore must have some basis of harmony. This much common sense teaches; and this much even the pagans of old understood. They knew the value of international agreements based on material interest, of undisturbed commercial relations, of diplomacy, alliance and treaty. But it was Christ who said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another." It was Christ who showed how far this love should go when He prayed upon the cross for those who crucified Him. Both His precept and His example have compelled the admiration of men in all ages. At this very time there are many who, though they have no longer the Christian faith, are striving to unite mankind as brothers. "Never perhaps," declares the Pope, "was human brotherhood more preached than now; nay, it is pretended that, without any help from the teaching of the Gospel or from the work of Christ and the Church, the spirit of brotherhood has been one of the highest creations of modern civilization. Yet the truth is that men never acted towards each other in less brotherly fashion than now. Race hatreds are becoming almost a frenzy; nation is divided from nation more by enmity and jealousy than by geogra-

phical position; in the same city, within the same walls, the different ranks are on fire with mutual envy; all take as their supreme law their own self-interest."

It is again this natural selfishness unchecked by any higher consideration that leads to disregard for authority and consequently imperils the structure of society. There has been, it is true, no lack of legislation. In every country law after law has been enacted and complex mechanisms have been devised for the administration of justice. And yet the essential element for securing the observance of law has too often been neglected. Unless men are taught to obey "for conscience sake," all discoursing about the majesty of the law is in vain. But no such obedience can be expected when the lawmakers themselves have abandoned the teaching of Christ. "Let princes and rulers of the peoples bear this in mind and bethink themselves whether it be wise and salutary that public authority should divorce itself from the holy religion of Jesus Christ, in which it may find so powerful a support. Let them seriously consider whether it be politically wise to banish from public instruction the teaching of the Gospel and of the Church. Experience teaches only too well that where religion is away public authority fails."

In these words the Holy Father indicates one of the principal evils of the time, an evil that is more fatal to national life than the invasion of hostile armies. An education that banishes God from the school can only consume the moral fiber of a people.

it cannot train up men who will respect authority and faithfully discharge their duties in time of peace; much less can it prepare them to act on the highest principles in the emergencies of war. A cultivated intelligence may easily become a dangerous weapon both to its owner and to his fellow men, if it be not controlled by an upright will. Where such restraint is lacking, the only means of preserving order is the threat or the application of external force. And once a people has been imbued with the idea that expediency is the only rule of conduct within its own borders, it will not scruple at violent measures when its interests or its claims encounter opposition from abroad. That war could possibly be unjust will scarcely occur to minds which have been educated without any reference to moral or religious obligation.

It should not be inferred that education as such is a failure. If its sole purpose were efficiency, abundant evidence of its success might be found in the present conflict. No previous war has called into action such varied capacity or such keen calculation. All the applications of science have been enlisted and all the resources of quick-witted thought; so that men marvel at their powers of destruction. But thereupon it is pertinent to ask why the same high degree of efficiency should not have been employed for the maintenance of peace, for the healing of the nations instead of their ruin. Education assuredly has accomplished its aim, but that aim did not include the things that make for peace. It gave men knowledge but left them without moral direc-

tion; and while it taught them to master the forces of nature it gave them no power over their own evil inclinations. It is not a failure if it be judged by what it undertook to achieve; and it is worse than a failure if it claim to be a "preparation for complete living."

In this latter respect, the test of war was not needed to reveal the errors that education has fostered. These had long since borne their fruit in the internal troubles, the social unrest, the strife of classes which spread more and more widely in the very countries that proudly boasted of their educational progress. To the idea of self-activity, sound enough in itself, there was gradually added the idea of self-assertion. Individualism became the avowed object of education; and from this, practically at least, there was but a step to downright egoism. To avert the consequence, men of discernment and good-will declared that the school should enlarge its scope, that it should impart a training in social activity, in service, in consecration to the common weal. This beyond question was a worthy aim, and so far as it has been realized, it deserves recognition. But the fact still remains that society is "divided into two opposing forces struggling against each other fiercely and without truce." It is still true that ability to gain and hold an advantage counts for more in the struggle than the desire to do justice or the willingness to give practical proof of the brotherhood of man.

At times, men have fought for principle or at least have come forth as champions of some ideal.

But in the struggle of the classes no such pretext is urged: it is plainly and frankly an effort on both sides to increase their holdings, to gain a larger share of the things that make life pleasant, and to set up the money standard as the most decisive if not the only means of appraising a man's worth. Nor is this surprising when we consider that so many have lost all thought of a life to come and have never been trained in the Christian virtues which are necessary alike to rich and poor. "When godless schools, moulding as wax the tender hearts of the young, when an unscrupulous press, continually playing upon the inexperienced minds of the multitude, when those other agencies that form public opinion, have succeeded in propagating the deadly error that man ought not to look for a happy eternity, that it is only here that happiness is to be found, in the riches, the honors, the pleasures of this life, it is not surprising that men, with their inextinguishable desire of happiness, should attack what stands in the way of that happiness with all the impelling force of their desire."

It is hardly too much to say that this passion for wealth has brought retribution upon itself, so enormous has been, and yet must be, the expenditure of treasure by the warring nations. What men have earned and hoarded is now being poured out, not to further life but to destroy it, not to equalize their possessions but to increase the world's indebtedness, not to render labor more productive but to make fewer the producers. The facts are surely a strange

commentary on our economic theories and on the numberless schemes that have been put forward as substitutes for charity in relieving poverty and distress. And on the other hand it is significant that in the day of direst need, charity alone has been really efficient in its tireless ministrations. Its greatest work is yet to be done, when the storm shall have subsided and the wreckage of war shall have been cleared away, leaving untold suffering as its principal result.

Meantime, the voice of humanity is gradually making itself heard. High-minded people are expressing the belief that this is the last of the world's great struggles and that the inevitable reaction will bring enduring peace. "War on war" is the cry that echoes from heart to heart and proclaims the advent of a new era. It is a righteous enthusiasm and every Christian will pray that it may issue in a blessed realization. But to bring this about something more than devout wishes is needed. The lessons of the war must be pondered, the former errors avoided, the evil conditions remedied, and the real causes once for all removed. Nothing is to be gained for the security of peace by assailing the truth of religion or by training the next generation to live without moral principle. No lasting harmony can be looked for unless the false notes of selfishness and greed are silenced forever.

War is an affair of the nations; its outbreak and its termination are national measures. Its prevention likewise, at the critical moment, must depend upon

the supreme authority in each state. But the real safeguards against it must be established long before the crisis arises; they must be firmly set in the hearts of the people. "Peace-loving" is doubtless a glorious title for nations and rulers, but the true peace-keepers are the individual citizens who overcome themselves, bringing their tendencies and desires into subjection to the law of Christ. Out of each soul the spirit of peace must come forth and then widen its wholesome influence through the home and the community until it permeate the life of the nation. This is genuine individualism, not the assertion but the sanctification of self, unto the glory of God and the winning of peace for all mankind.

In one sense, therefore, the Christian is constantly at war. It is a spiritual warfare without truce or concession. Its battles are fought in the soul against passion and pride, against sin and temptation. Its victories are recorded in the Book of Life, its prizes awarded in the eternity of God. They who wage it are the strongest and bravest of men, because their courage and their strength come from above. They are the guardians of peace on earth because they have vanquished in themselves the worst of enemies, and won for love its greatest triumph.

To such a warfare St. Paul exhorts us in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of His power. Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against

principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints." (Ep. VI, 10-18.)

Mindful of these words of the Apostle, we call upon the clergy and the faithful under our charge to pray without ceasing for the restoration of peace, beseeching Almighty God to touch with His grace the minds and the wills of men that they may stretch forth their hands not to slay but to lift up and bless their fellowmen. Let earnest supplication be made for the Church to the end that all its members, united in one saving faith, may renew and bind more closely the union of all peoples. Let us with deeper fervour implore the King of Peace to guide and strengthen His Vicar, the Sovereign Pontiff, and grant him the consolation of knowing that the nations have heeded his words and ceased from the work of destruction. Above all, let each of us set

dissension aside and by our unselfish conduct at home and abroad, give proof to the world that we "love not in word nor in tongue but in deed and in truth".

"Grace be with you, mercy and peace, from God the Father, and from Christ Jesus, the Son of the Father, in Truth and charity". (St. John, 2nd Ep. 1, 3).

This Pastoral Letter shall be read in every Church of the Diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor shall officiate therein.

✠ EDWARD McCARTHY,
Archbishop of Halifax.

H. J McCALLION,
Pro Sec.

Halifax, Feb. 8th, 1915.